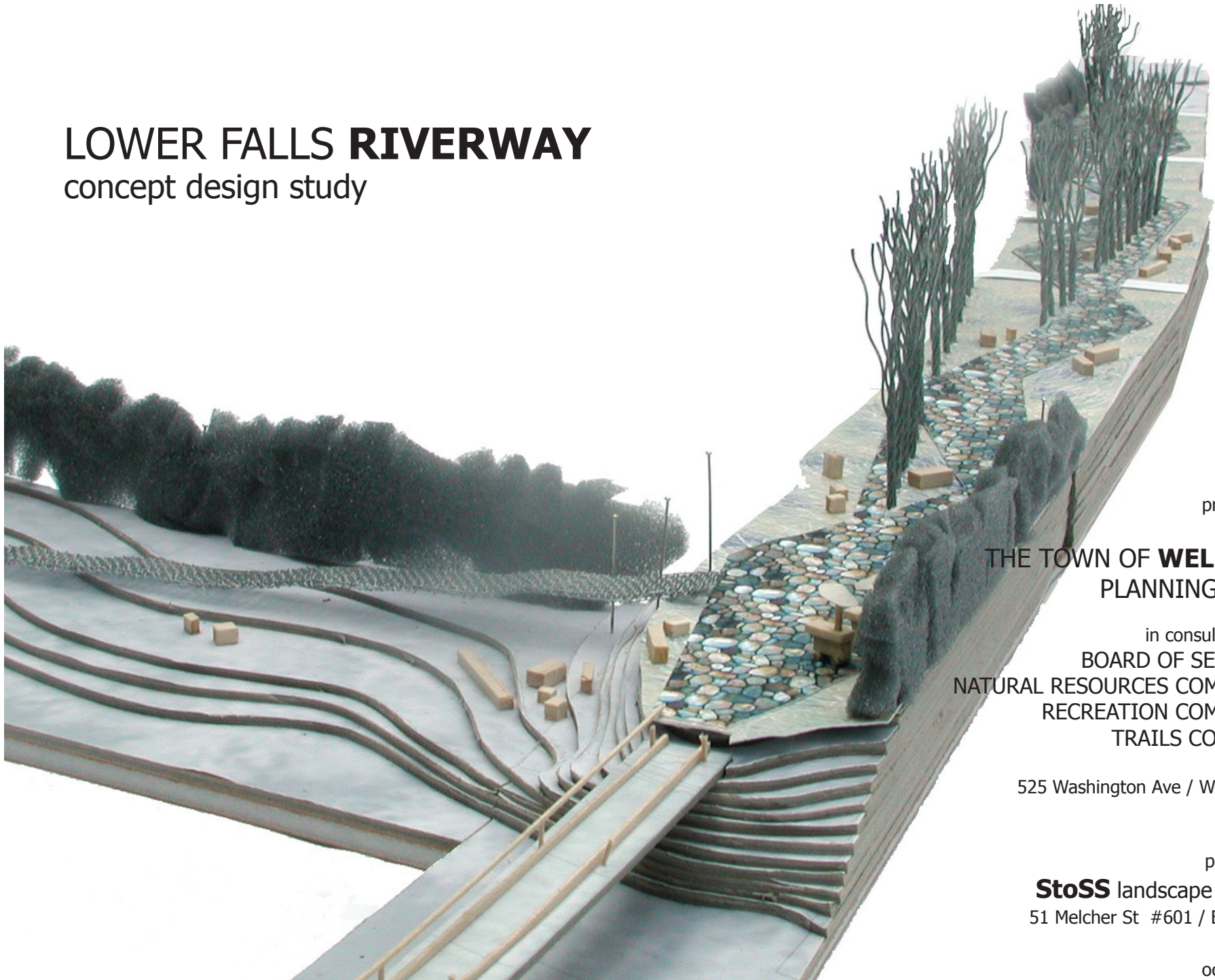


LOWER FALLS RIVERWAY

concept design study



prepared for:

THE TOWN OF **WELLESLEY**
PLANNING BOARD

in consultation with:

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
RECREATION COMMISSION
TRAILS COMMITTEE

525 Washington Ave / Wellesley, MA

prepared by:

StoSS landscape urbanism
51 Melcher St #601 / Boston, MA

october 2003

A photograph of a dense forest with trees showing early autumn colors (green and yellow) reflected in a calm body of water. The text "the prize..." is overlaid in white. The scene is peaceful, with the water acting as a mirror for the foliage above. The trees are mostly deciduous, with some bare branches visible in the upper center. The overall tone is serene and natural.

the prize...

A photograph of a dense forest with lush green trees. In the foreground, a calm river reflects the surrounding foliage. The text "is the river." is overlaid in white, centered horizontally.

is the river.

OVERVIEW

The Concept Design Study for the proposed Lower Falls Riverway is an extension of the Town of Wellesley's Comprehensive Plan, which identified the former railroad right-of-way in Lower Falls as a pedestrian-oriented open space.

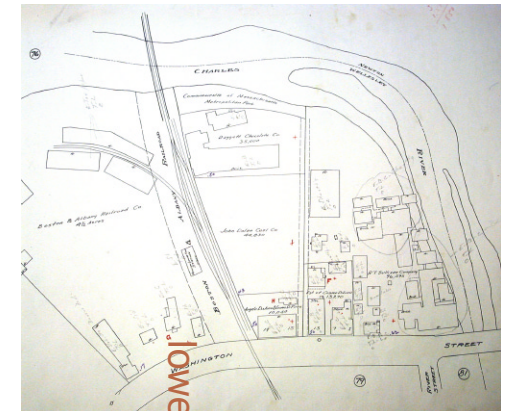
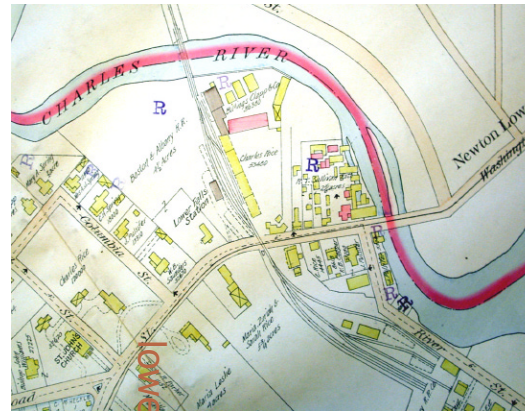
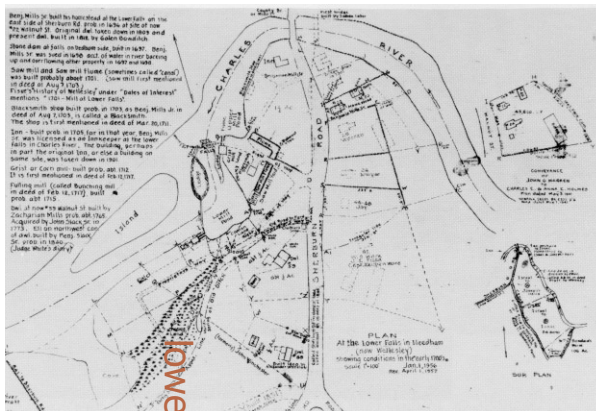
The proposed plan establishes a clear pedestrian and bicycle link from Washington Street to the Charles River and the adjacent state parkland along the river (administered by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, formerly the Metropolitan District Commission). The plan also allows for potential future connections north across the old railroad bridge, and eventually to a DCR-sponsored rail-to-trail project through Newton to the Riverside MBTA station and beyond to the entire Charles River Reservation.

As envisioned, the Riverway creates a vital open space amenity in the heart of busy Lower Falls. It offers quiet recreational opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, visitors, and local

workers on lunch break. It can also be adapted to accommodate vendors and to make lateral connections to adjacent buildings and development sites. The proposed Riverway would greatly enhance the image of Lower Falls, and it would serve as a tangible and achievable foundation for future mixed use developments and projects.

The Lower Falls Riverway study has been developed for and by the Planning Board of the Town of Wellesley, in close consultation with the Board of Selectmen, the Natural Resources Commission, the Recreation Commission, and the Trails Committee. In addition, two public workshops were held for participation and review by local residents and business people. Finally, during the development of the plan, the project team consulted with the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Light Plant, and representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the City of Newton Planning Department.

HISTORY



...a fledgling industrial village sited to take advantage of the river's falls...the right-of-way

The opportunity now is to reconnect Lower



credits: 1-3: Wellesley Post Card Album; 4: Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds Corn



lower falls 2002

was occupied by freight and passenger rail lines...

Falls and Washington Street to the area's richest resource—the Charles River.



riverway 2003

SITE . CONTEXT

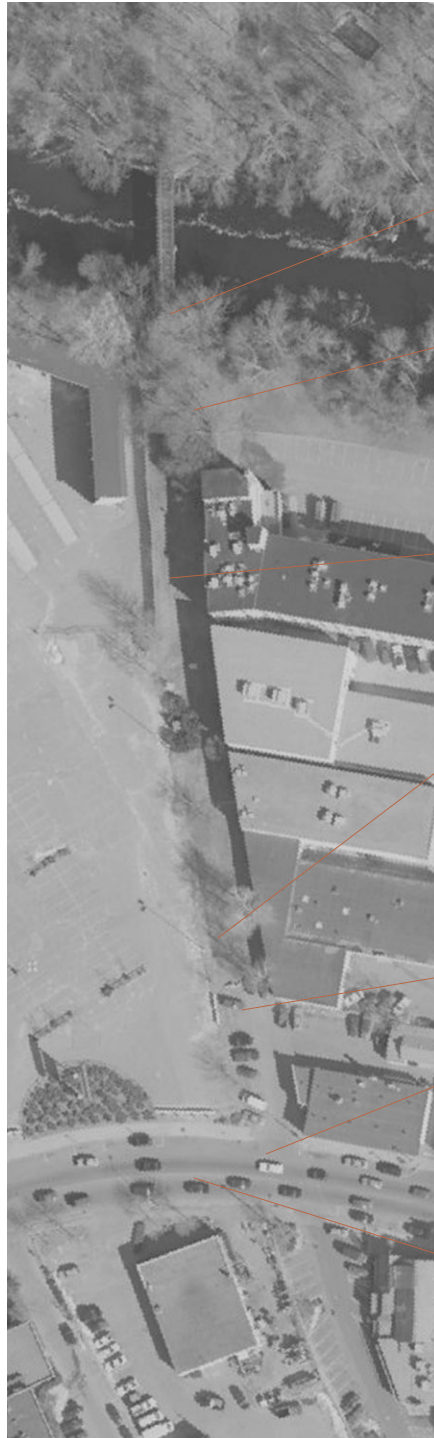


regional systems



ownership

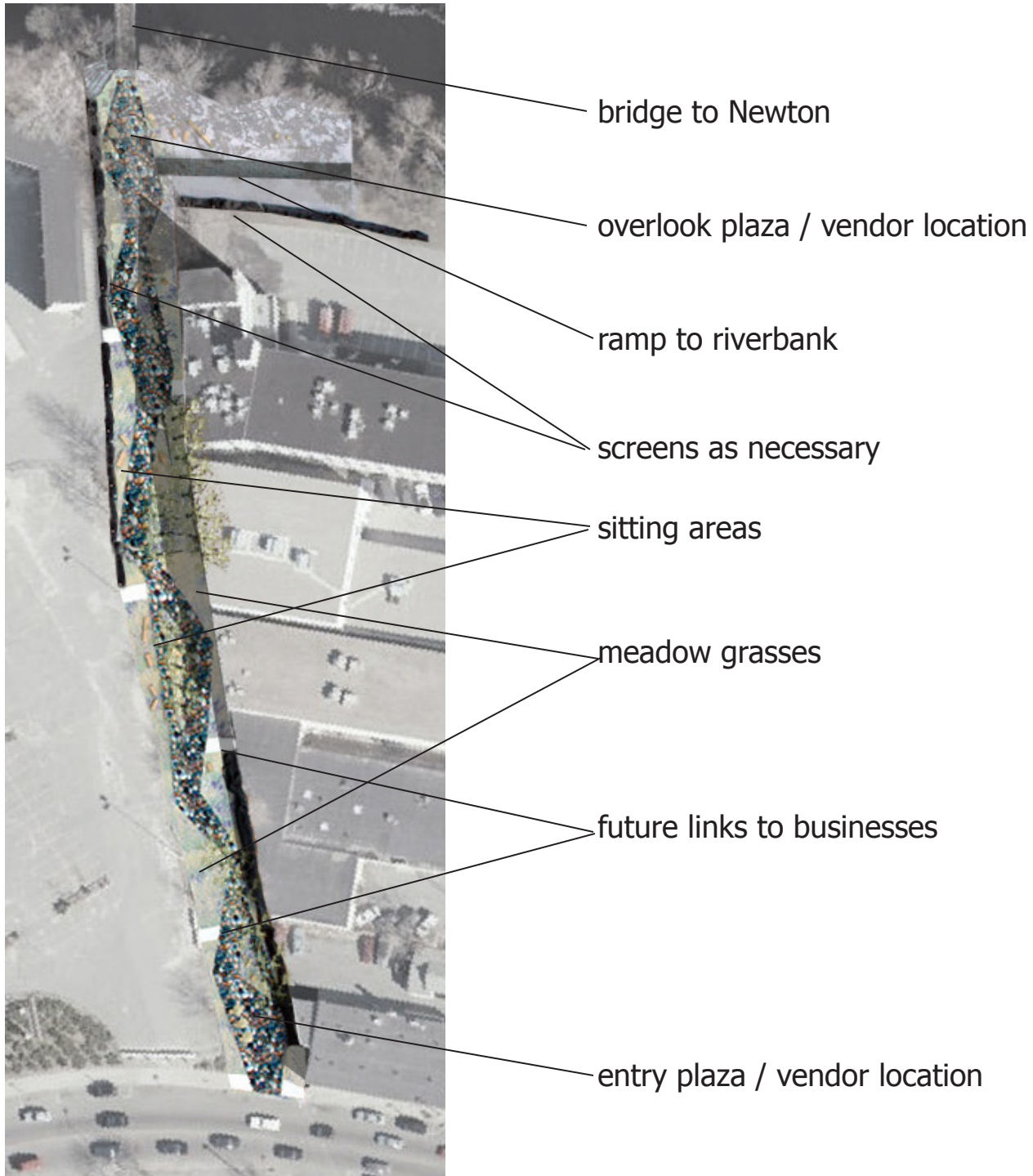
Lower Falls was once the nexus of regional rail, road, and river systems. The railroad right-of-way, owned by the Town of Wellesley, offers a direct link to the Charles River and the first segment of a rail-to-trail project that could extend through Newton to the Riverside T station.



EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY

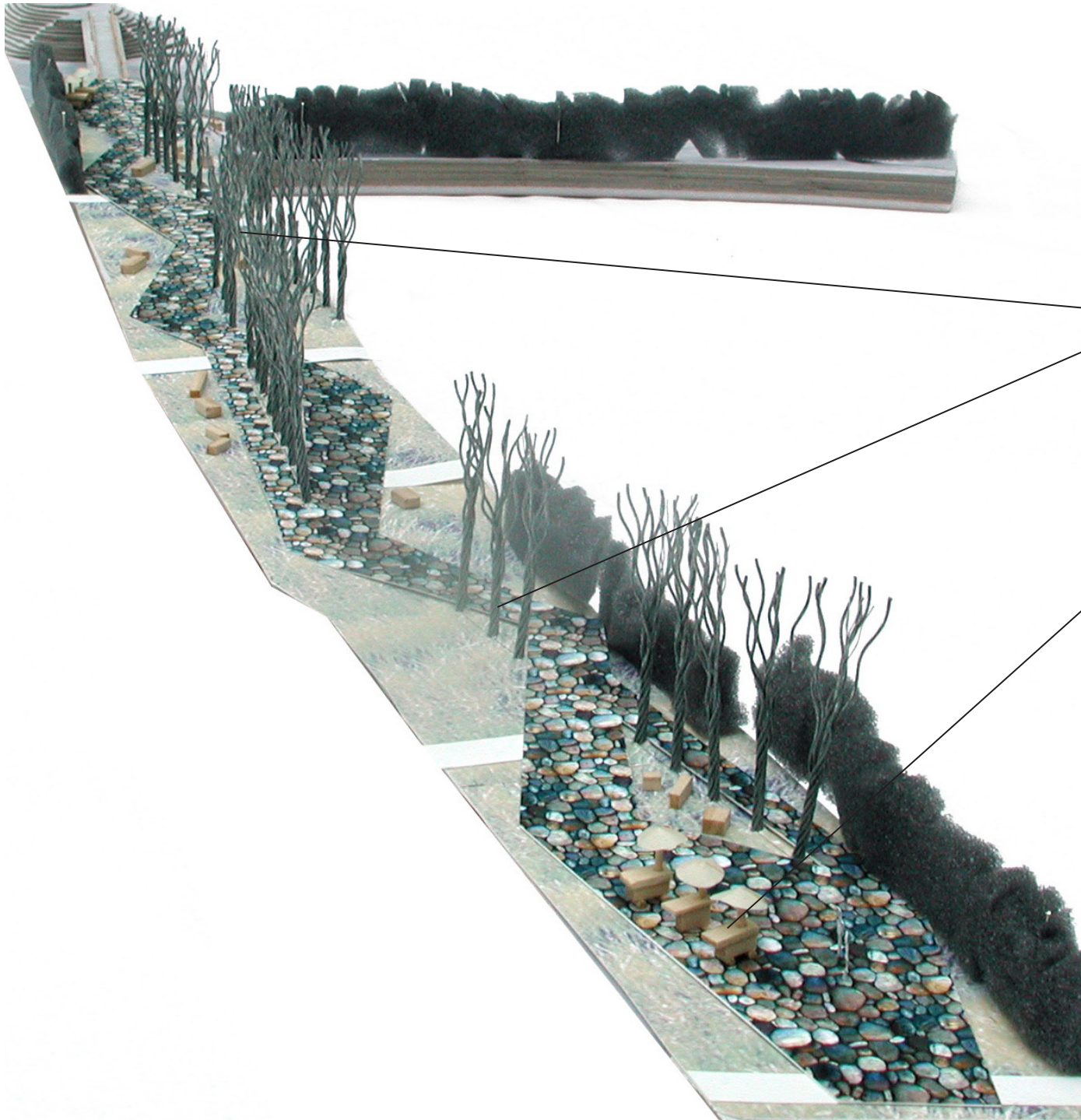


PROPOSED RIVERWAY



The proposed path meanders between Washington Street and the Charles River. Rendered in vivid cut river stone, the path draws one in, widens to accommodate vendors, and branches and narrows to create quiet sitting areas.

Linear rows of trees surrounded by meadow grass reinforce visual connections along the Riverway. Future connections could be established across the bridge to Newton, down to the river bank, and later to neighboring businesses.



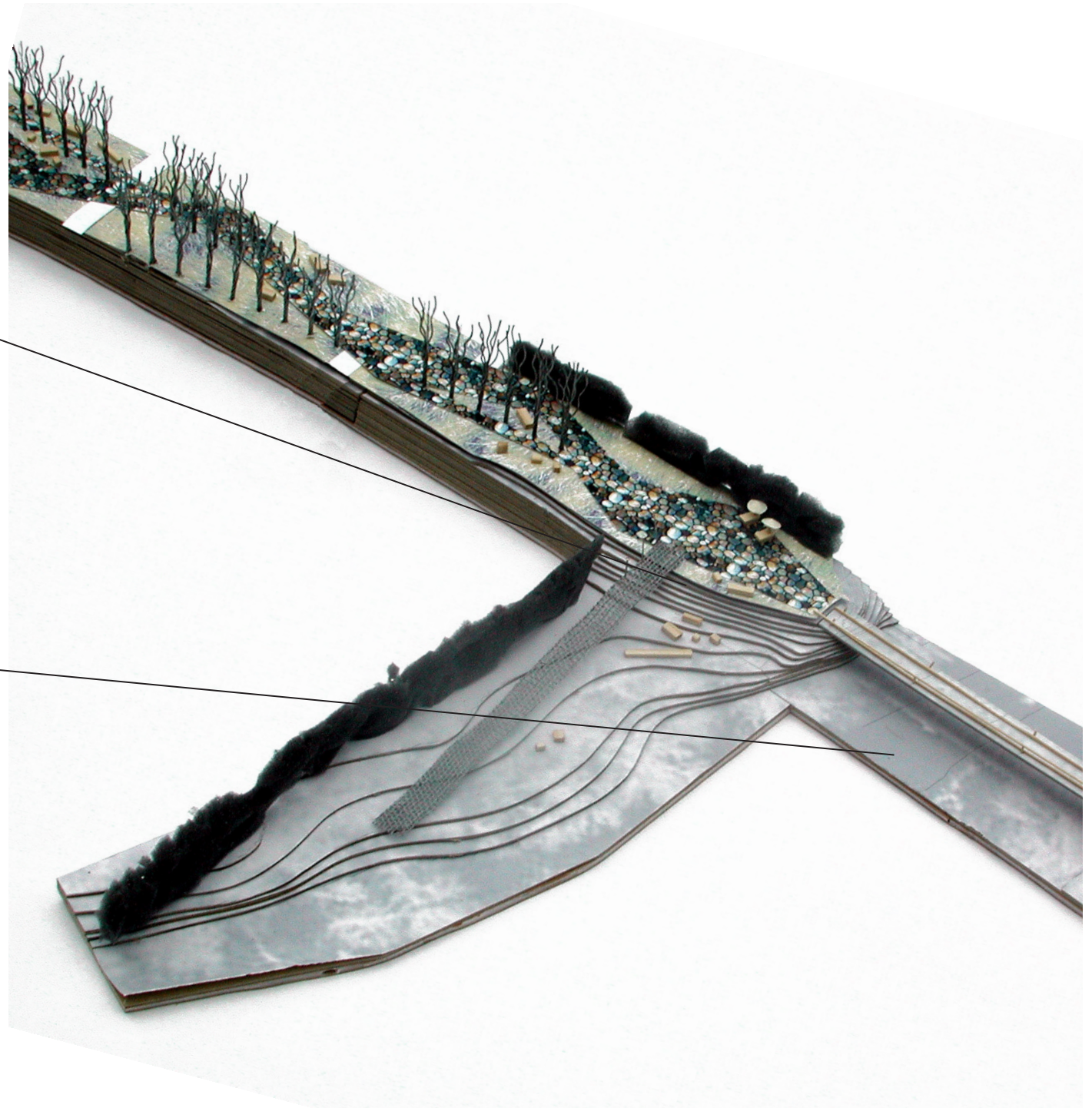
credit: rizzo associates



The riverwalk widens significantly at each end to form an entry plaza and a river overlook, both of which could accommodate small vendor stands. Wider paths and plaza areas can accommodate bicycles, while narrow paths offer detours for pedestrians.



The overlook plaza at the north end of the Riverway offers views to the river, a future connection to Newton across the refurbished bridge and a ramp directly down to the riverbank.

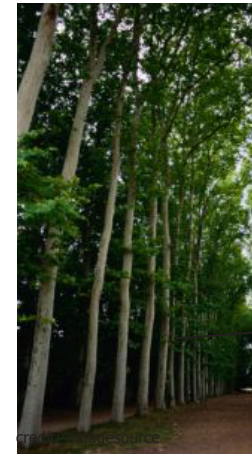


MATERIALS . ELEMENTS

The Riverway is articulated with richly colored and textured river-stones, split face up, that establish a clear identity for the Riverway and allow for universal access.



Lines of trees establish visual connections and continuity between Washington Street and the Charles River.



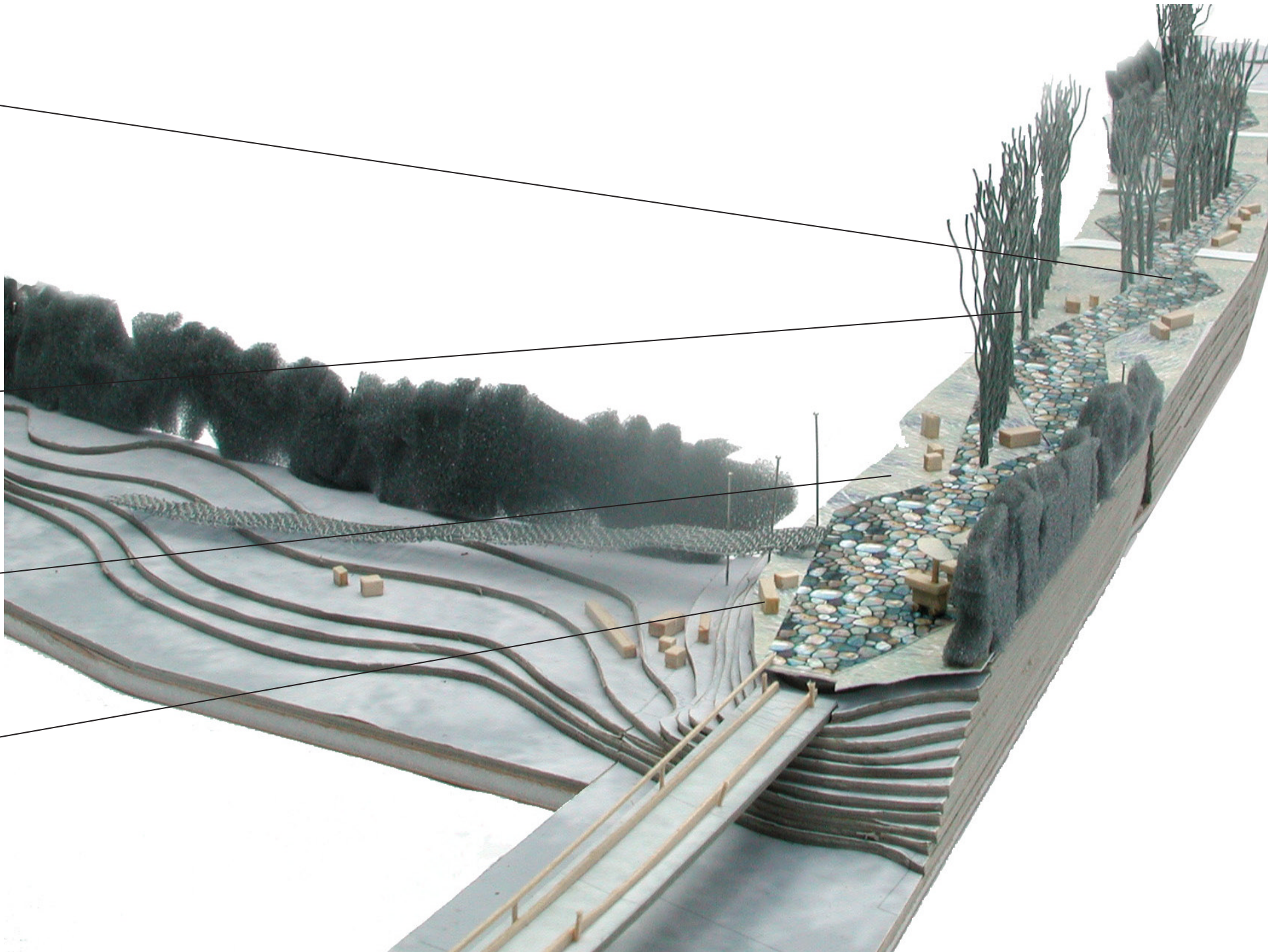
Meadow grasses on either side of the river stone path recall the meadows and fields that once characterized this farming town.



Concrete seating elements at multiple scales and sizes offer a variety of seating opportunities and arrangements and recall the area's industrial history.



Adjacent businesses, current and future, are encouraged to create entrances onto the Riverway. When such opportunities arise, simple concrete paths can be extended from the riverwalk directly to the proposed entries and doorways.



LOWER FALLS **RIVERWAY**

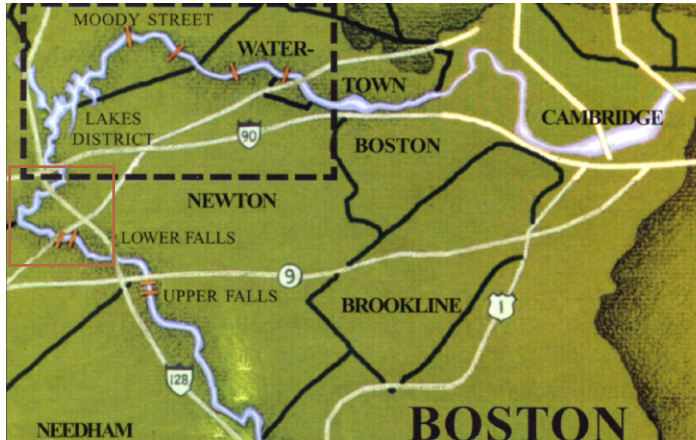
IMPLEMENTATION

The Riverway is designed to be implemented in layers, starting with the paved pathway and surrounding meadow grasses. Columnar and screen trees could be implemented at the same time, or delayed until funding is available. Seating is flexible and can be added through time as demand increases.

Refurbishment of the old railroad bridge and a proposed connection down to the riverbank on DCR parkland may proceed independently.

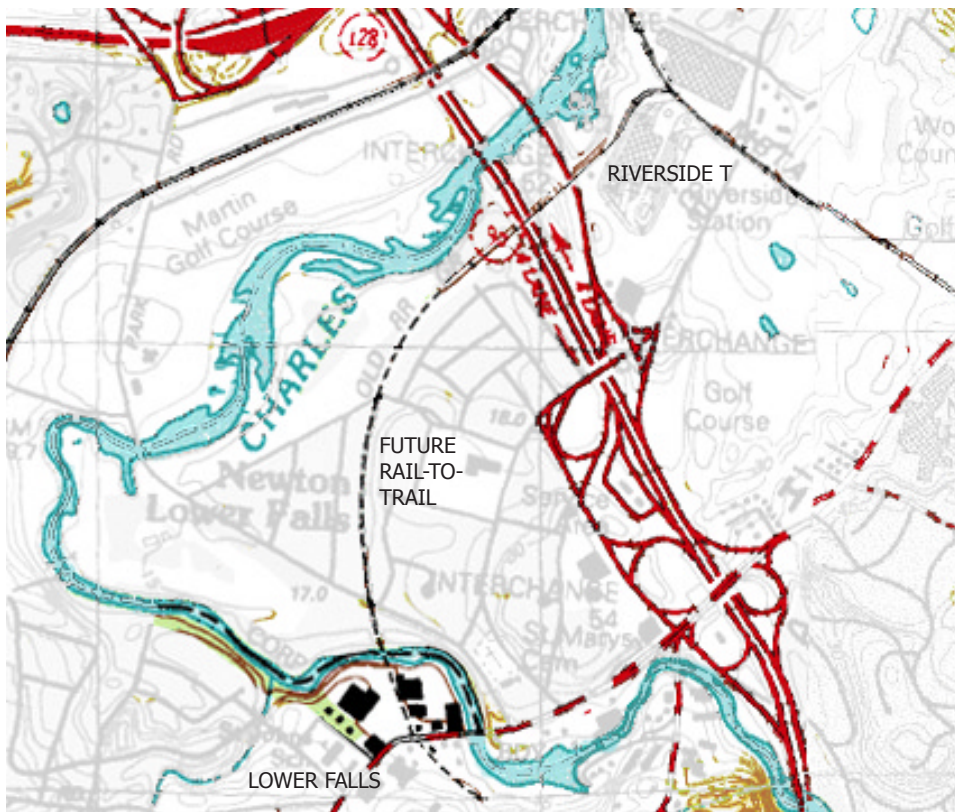


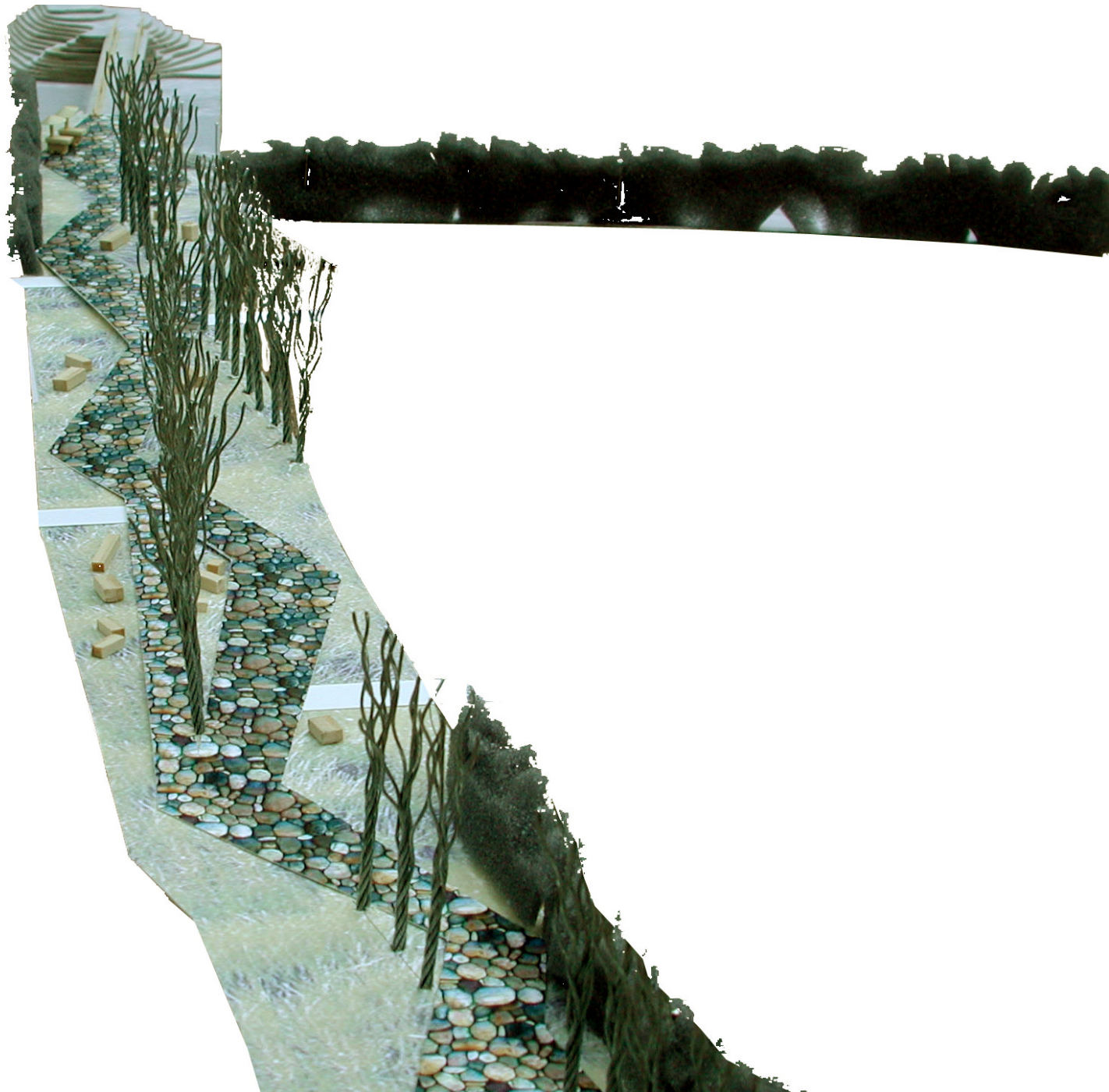
PARTNERING . FUNDING



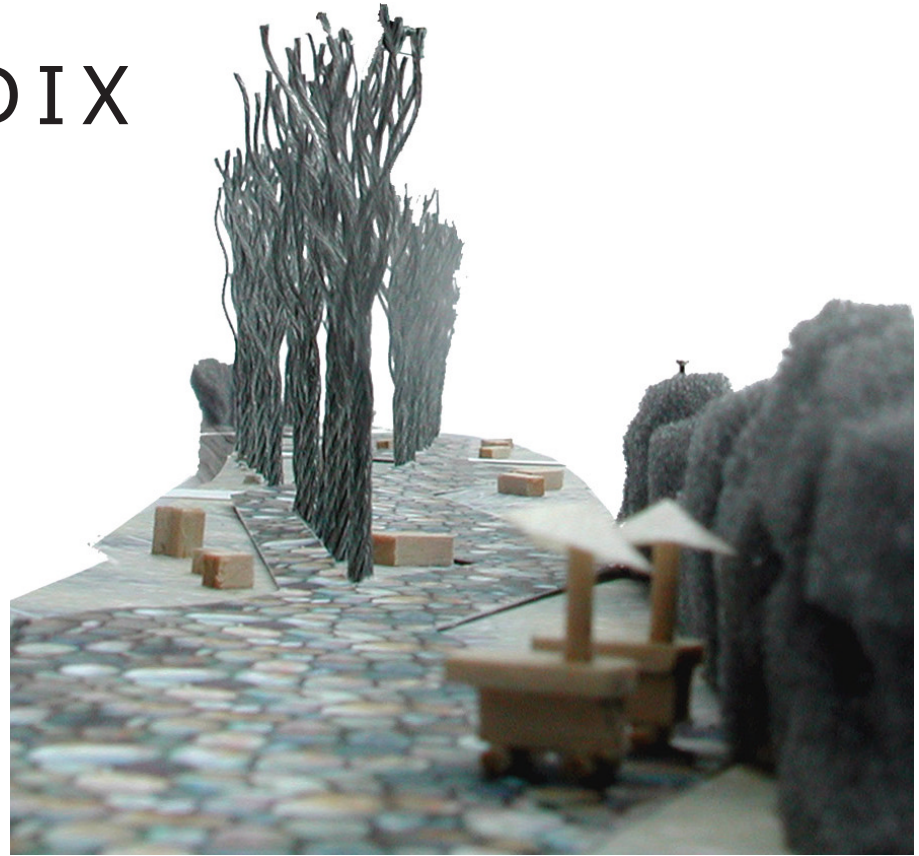
credit: Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation

The most favorable implementation strategy would involve the establishment of a conservation easement. In doing so, the town would guarantee the Riverway's use as open space well into the future. Funding for design, implementation, and maintenance could also become available, if the Riverway was developed in conjunction with the Department of Conservation & Recreation's planned extension of the Charles River Reservation recreation trails. The DCR is currently looking to develop the railroad right-of-way through Newton as an extension of the Reservation trails that extend to the Museum of Science in Boston; the Riverway would form the southernmost link of this phase of trail development.





APPENDIX



CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES

As part of the planning process with the Planning Board and the general public, a number of conceptual design alternatives were developed to understand potential program, character, and form.

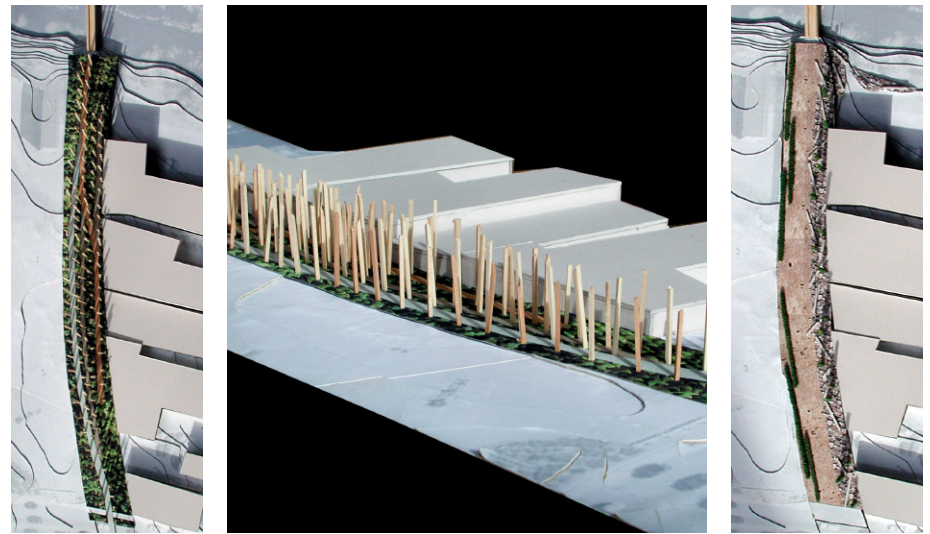
1 Railroad Garden included multiple paths aligned with the former railroad tracks and spurs that were once present on the site. Seating areas were placed along the edges of the site, away from the primary travel zones. The multiple paths and slightly sheltered seating areas were well-received.

2 River Walk was characterized by a large meandering path of vivid paving. The simplicity of the design and the richness of the materials were especially liked.

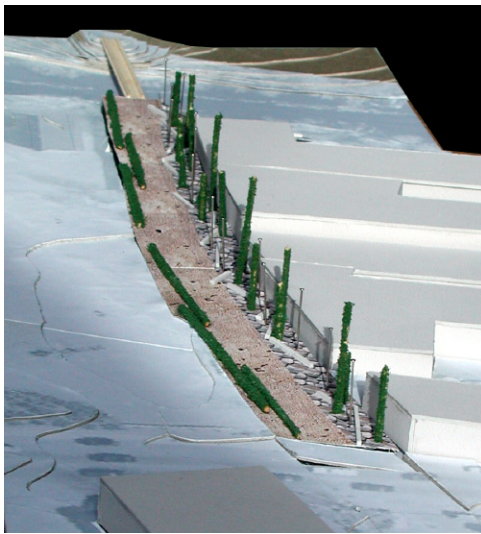
3 Linear Plaza utilized multiple areas of paving to establish sitting and gathering zones along the Riverway. Distinctly urban, the Linear Plaza scheme was felt to be inappropriate for the context.

4 The final preliminary scheme, Hybrid, was a more complex system of paths and plazas—too complex, it was thought, for the site.

Residents, workers, and business-people all expressed widespread support for the final proposed design, which emerged from ideas in options 1 and 2.



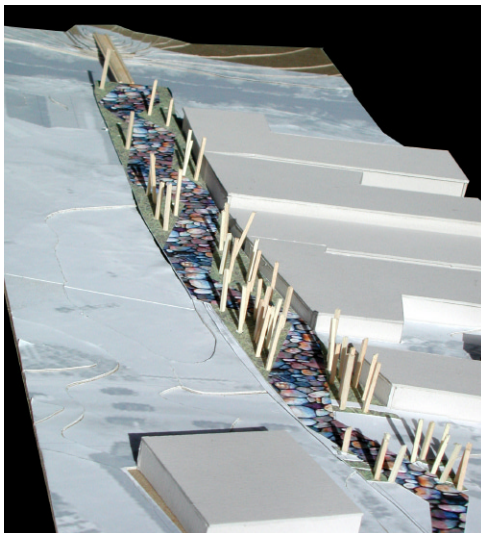
railroad garden



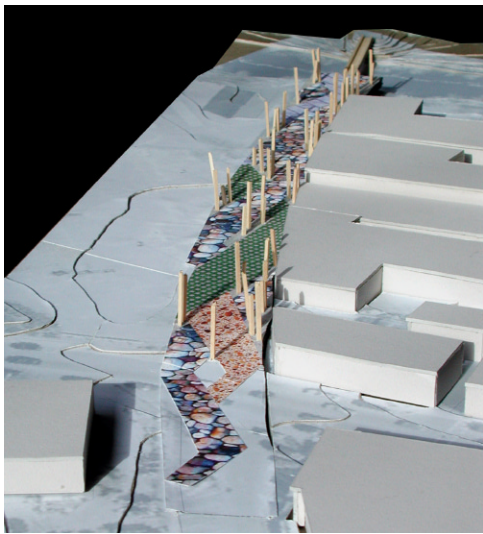
linear plaza



river walk



hybrid



RESOURCES

Town of Wellesley Comprehensive Plan, 1994.

Town of Wellesley Zoning Bylaw.

Town of Wellesley Design Guidelines.

Wellesley Lower Falls Zoning, Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines, Goody Clancy & Associates and Connery Associates, March 18, 1997.

Plans for the Reconstruction of Central Street and Washington Steet, Beta Engineering Inc.

Historic Photographs and Maps are taken from:

The Wellesley Historical Society Collections.

Town Of Wellesley Planning Department Collections.

The Wellesley Post Card Album. Wellesley, MA: The Wellesley Historical Society, 1999.

Elizabeth M. Hinchcliffe. Five Pounds Currency, Three Pounds Corn: Wellesley's Centennial Story. Town of Wellesley, MA: 1981.

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